

SUMMARY OF PROJECT REPORT
ON
A STUDY OF FOLK THEATRES IN SOUTH WEST REGION OF
MAHARASHTRA NORTH KARNATAKA & GOA

A nation is known for its theatre – folk theatre, Proscenium theatre, Professional theatre and amateur theatre. India, being an ancient country which has a glorious tradition of theatric found in a narrative form with recitation, singing, dancing and musical beat. Theatre, a worldwide phenomenon of performing genre of act, had emerged from the dawn of human civilization. It has been remained as a myth and mysterious venture. Bharatmuni's magnum opus, 'Natyashastra' an authoritative dramaturgy which paved the theatre norms. It has been recognized a sacred treatise of Indian dramaturgy and it is a treasure of Indian genesis of theatre genre.

The performing folk art and drama in India is said to have that it has sprang up through the cultural and ritual behavior of primitive folk people. Initially, primitive folk were inhabitants in remote area who observed the miraculous happenings in the form of nature's benevolence and harmful invisible power. It was called a 'Yatushakti'. To avoid the nature's harmful power, primitive folk endeavored to perform religious rituals, rituals of nature through 'Yatuvaidhi' or 'Yatukriya' to protect them from natural calamities. They learnt to invoke the Gods and Goddesses and for the invisible power, folk worshiped either on individual or collective level. The collective worshipping and celebration of deities in the form of public performance took new shape as a religious performances and it began to be known as 'Lokdharm'.

The origin of the folk theatre genre has been deeply rooted in the religious instinct and ceremonial act or rite. The community indulged in different rituals and to propitiate the natural hindrances. The kinship with religious ceremonies of the primitive folk imparted the notion of folk theatre genre. There could be seen 'ritual' and 'drama' at a time in ritual drama. In the course of time ritual dramas transformed into folk theatre. At a certain time

ritual drama freed from rite and emerged as the entire folk theatre. The folk theatre evolved from Rite – rituals drama – dramatic ritual or Natyavidhi to folk theatre.

The term 'folk theatre' has been interpreted and evaluated on its different aspects by various researchers and enthusiasts of this genre. The English word 'folk' is derived a Germanic noun 'fulka' meaning people who are pertaining to inhabitants or grounded to native soil their culture, tradition or history. The word 'theatre' is derived from the Greek for seeing place, describes the whole building, drama hall, the place of performing act hall. But 'folk theatre' is a small space which is cleaned and erected four polls and performance takes place in an open air space. This primitive theatre genre was labeled as the 'people's theatre' and popular 'rural theatre' and 'cycle-plays'.

The primitive performing from in village emerged in the yearly round of religious, agricultural or civic festivals. It expresses the cultural heritage of a region. The folk performative act remained as the life force of entertainment in the native language and in the manner of folksy style. The extempore dialogues and acting amuse rural folk and they experience the emotional bonding with the primitive performances. Folk performances were happened with the inclusion of natural ingredients easily available around the inhabitant place.

In the course of time folk theatre has become the matter of harsh critique on the grounds of its performative form and technique. Some critics are denied to opt it as a pure performative art by saying it is impolite, degraded, rude and vulgar, it is restricted to view performance by the elitists. Others are in opinion that the folk dramas should not be treated as pure dramatic art because it has no 'Nataktva'.

Nevertheless, such incisive comment on folk theatre over the years in India has been remained an explorative and interesting area for the research scholars and enthusiasts. The study of folk theatre is like returning from the Alibaba cave. So, Indian folk theatre is called the 'Fourth Wall' of the naturalistic proscenium theatre.

Initially, the present project researcher was determined to explore the folk theatre of South West region of Maharashtra only, but in the course of exploration, he did attract towards the folk theatre of neighbouring states – North Karnataka and Goa. And finally research report is prepared on the respective three states's folk theatre. It will be remained torch bearing work for another budding scholars in folk theatre genre.

Each state of India has peculiar theatre forms – Ramlila, Raslila and Nautanki of North India, Bhavai of Gujarat, Tamasha of Maharashtra, Jatra of Bengal and Orissa, Yakshgana of Karnataka, Bhand of Kashmir, Jogis of Panjab. The traditional Indian folk theatres are divided into six categories – Religious, balletic, regionalistic presence, Procession theatre, dance dramas and secular forms. The immediate purpose of Indian folk theatre is to entertain the common masses through enlightenment, teaching and preaching to common folk in their native language.

These three neighbouring states – 'big three sisters' have some common threads in terms of cultural diversity and similarities, sameness in environmental aspects, inter linkages of folk tradition to each other. Each of these have preserved the tradition of folk theatre which are evolved from folk traditions, strange ritual rites, evoking holy spirits and funeral processional rites. The folk theatre genre is borned out of these living spring of folk tradition and conventions.

FINDINGS / OUTCOMES :

1. Even as the folk performative art is considered to be the degraded theatre genre it has also a definite dramatic structure like consecration of Gods and Goddesses, performance of Pooja, garlanding to Samai, Gana, Avahan (Invocation) and Naman in Purvarang section and Vag. (main performance) Akhyan, and arti in the Uttarrang section. In the purvrang section of Dashavatar, Tamasha, Lalit, Jagarn, Sutradhar evokes Goddess Saraswati, Sharada, Vishnu, Shankar-Parvati, Lord Ganesh, Riddhi-Siddhi.

2. Names of the folk dramas are given in the indigenous languages of Marathi, Kannada and Konkani. The names varies from its native aura but the performative techniques, are to some extent, the same one. The religious ritual dramas in Maharashtra, Karnataka and Goa are : Gondhal-Gondhaligaras ata (in Karnataka), Jagaran – Zagar, Lalit-Panchami-Lalit in Goa, Naman Khele-Khel and Konkani Dashavatar Known as Dashantari or Khele, Dashavatar in Maharashtra and Goa. Dashavatar ata in Karnataka, Tamasha and Jalasa in Maharashtra whereas ‘Dasarata’ in Kannada. BGhakti movement gave an impetus to some folk theatre in Maharashtra are kirtan, Songibhajan, Bharud and Vaghy-Murali. These religious performative dramas are very dominant in Maharashtra comparing to Karnataka and Goa.

Local deities are summoned in the performance of Bhavada. Tarafa, Lalit and Vaghya-Murali, Gondhal, Panchami in Maharashtra and Kalo in Goa. In Dashavatari Kala and Gopal Kala, the devotees engage in the procession of local deities with a lot of enthusiasm and ritualistic fervour singing, dancing. The devotees engross totally in the event forgetting the outer world. The deities are put in the upper balcony of the Sabha Mandap (Maand) and actors perform the Kala facing the deity.

3. Folk theatre performances in the three states are performed from the specific communities : Dashavatar of Maharashtra and Goa perform by Deoli community, the devotees of Gram deities like Lingayat and Gurv Community. They are called Dashavatari or Kheliye and Bhagavat. Dasarata is performed by the Dasa community in Karnataka. Perni Zagar by Perni community and Gavada Zagar by converted Gavada Christian Community members in Goa perform on the specific season. Perni community is mainly known as singer community spreaded in Bicholim taluka, Ponda talunka and Concona taluka of Goa states. Gondhal-Gondhali community, vaghya-Murali- the devotees of Khandoba, Dahaka – Kumbhar community, Dandar – adivasi People, Tamasha – Mahar, Mang, Kolhati and some out castes.

4. Some common characters found in the folk theatres of three states. ‘Sutradhara’ is one of the significant character found in folk theatres of

Maharashtra and Goa. He handles the Dashavatari drama solely in independent manner. His typical dress code in Dashavatar Khele is the Golden embroidery Dhoti, the long robe and golden lined Uperne on the shoulder and Puneri Pagadi on the head. The whole Dashavatari Kheliye rests in the hands of Sutradhara.

There is another typical character appears recurrently in folk theatres of Maharashtra and Goa is 'Jester' or 'Vidhushak' in Dashavatar and 'aunt' or 'mavashi' in Tamasha; 'Duti' in Krishna Parijat of Karnataka. Duti is much sophisticated and refined character exchanges the vedantic philosophy. Audience enjoy their cutting obscenic and ridiculous jokes.

5. Mask or Songe is the part and parcel aspect in the folk theatres of Maharashtra and Goa. The characters like Ganpati, Saraswati, Sharada, 'Mhatari' wear wooden masks in Perni Zagor and Songes of Songibhajan in Maharashtra. The minor characters like 'Madhubhau' and 'Kitubhau' in Perni Zagor wear wooden masks.

6. The subject of the root of folk theatre has been always remained a matter of exploration and out come of the study of folk theatre genre. Dashavatar is derived from Kuchipudi and another school of thought claims that the origin of Dashavatar is the 'Yakshagana'. Hiranmanji Lange mentions that the Konkani Dashavatar is brought from Karnataka by Shamaji Kale of Konkan, which began to be known as Dashantri or Khele. Dr. H.K. Rangnath Strongly states that Dashavatari khele is known as 'Dashavatarad ata' and Nachkund which performed in the court of Vijaynagar. Dr. Maya Sirdesai opine that the king Shahaj Raje Bhosale of Tanjawar wrote eight Marathi Dasharatari plays, strongly influenced on the folk theatres S.N. Banhatti has made bole argument that there is an influence of Vishnudas Bhave's plays on Konkani Dashavatari Khele.

Some are in opinion that Tamasha's root is connected to Bhakti cult, others feel that Gondhal is the main form of Tamasha, Tamasha is also evolved Gondhal, Jagar and Bharud. The word 'Gammat' was used initially which

turned into Khel Tamasha another trend about the root of Tamasha is that it has evolved through the 'Jagaran' tradition of Holi festival.

The origin of jalasa is said to have found in Tamasha. Dasarata has the root of Jalsa. The modern Barbala performance is developed from Jalsa genre. Gondhal, perhaps had its origin in Kerala, Karnataka and then spreaded to Maharashtra. The Songibhajan may have existed from the mixture of Kirtan, Lalit and Bharud. This may be called 'Chakribhajan'. Kalapathak genre has evolved through Tamash, Jalsa and Sangit Mela.

7. Karnataka theatre is mainly known for its antiquity and past glory than Maharashtra and Goa. It is much older than Telgu, Tamil and Marathi theatre. It impetused to evolve Marathi and Goan folk theatre. The frequent visit of Kannada troupes in Maharashtra, influenced to Vishnu Das Bhave and Annasaheb Kirloskar. Kirloskar wrote plays in the patterns of 'Javadi', 'Krishna Parijat' and 'Dasarpada' of Karnataka.

8. The mythical stories and episodes from Indian epics are remained great inspiration to incorporate in Karnatakas Doddatas : Lavankush, Bhimarjunara Kaalga, Lankadahan and Keechakvadha and Dashavatari Khele and Konkan and Goa area. These plays were presented in grandure and imposing manner; having valour and courage of great characters.

9. Paduvalapaya or Yakshagana of Mysore region and Mudalapaya of North Karnataka plays are entirely based on dance and music pattern. Radhanata, Sangya-Balya, Roopsena and Station master are all musical plays. The folk theatre of Maharashtra like Tamasha, Gondhal, Kalapathak Vaghya-Murali, Radhanata, Sangya-Balya of Karnataka are more dance dramas than its thematic concerns. Extempore and situational dialogues create the live performances.

10. The musical instruments of the three stae's folk theatre are the same. Harmonium, Tabla, Mridang, Damadi, Duff. Tala (cumbal), tuntune are the same instruments in Maharashtra and Karnataka folk theatre. 'Ghumat' is a very typical instrument found in south Konkan region and in North Karnataka and Goa.

11. In the earliest days, folk theatre performances were happened in the light of Mashal or Hillal and it replaced by petromax light and sophisticated lighting systems are brought into folk theatre as the necessity of age.

12. One of the most striking features of Karnataka theatre is that the conversion of professional theatre into Sannata folk theatre. The professional theatre maintains the dignity of theatricality as far as possible through its presentation techniques, costume, thematic concerns, and stage properties. But in the course of time professional theatres merged into Sannata for due some reasons. By adding some Songs and dances, there professional theatres transformed into Sannata and began to be known as Sannata loosing its grandeur and magnificence. Bgagy-Lakshmi, Hemreddi Mallamma are the best examples of transforming from professional to Sannata form.

13. The troupes of folk dramas in Maharashtra and Goa are restricted in regional constraints. But Folk theatres of Kanataka are performed in Maharashtra of Kannada speaking belt – Gadhinglaj Taluka. Radhanata, Shri. Krishna Parijat, Sangy-Balya, Hemreddi Mallamma are the major folk dramas which performed in Kannada speaking area of Maharashtra.

14. These big three sister states have been influenced on each other in the case of language. Pernit Zagar beging in-vocation in Kannada language which is familier to Goan people and Marathi words are used in Gavada Zagar.